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PROACTIVE MARINE CORPS TRANSITION ASSISTANCE
IN THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY

by

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Biography

Keith A. Forkin is a 1993 graduate of Villanova University where he earned a Bachelor of Science in Accounting. He holds a Juris Doctorate from Villanova University School of Law, a Masters of Law in International Law from George Washington University Law School, and a Masters of Military Studies from Marine Corps Command and Staff College. He commanded Headquarters and Support Battalion, School of Infantry (West) from 2011 to 2013 and has also held a variety of staff officer positions at the component command, national headquarters, and major subordinate command levels.



Abstract

This paper will examine the programmatic efficiency and effectiveness of the Marine Corps Transition Readiness Program (TRP) in the context of the Transition Readiness Seminar (TRS), the Marine for Life Cycle to include case management, and the transition of Marines to civilian society after separation or retirement. This review will provide insight into current programmatic shortfalls and will then recommend pragmatic improvements to enhance TRP.

TRP has improved at the deck plate level over the last two years through the adoption of new transition assistance requirements to include a formal one-week standardized TRS and Capstone. The implementation of the Marine for Life Cycle concept will further improve transition readiness. However, significant programmatic shortfalls exist in quantitatively, qualitatively, and temporally tracking Marines through the course of their Marine for Life Cycle and with measuring the efficiency and effectiveness of the transition of Marines to civilian society. There is presently no case management system in place across the Marine Corps to capture these relevant readiness metrics. A case management system would enhance the efficiency and effectiveness of TRP through tracking the Marine for Life Cycle, memorializing the timely completion of all transition assistance requirements, facilitating Marine Veteran mentoring of transitioning Marines, and confirming the successful transition of Marines to civilian society. There is also no Marine Corps Order on TRP and no formal TRP training for leaders at each level in the chain of command. Creation of a Marine Corps Order and annual training requirements would provide a roadmap to educate leaders on the importance of TRP. Implementation of all of these measures would promote the proactive identification of points of friction in TRP and would keep faith with our Marines by further setting the conditions for them to succeed as they transition to first-class citizens and veterans in civilian society.

INTRODUCTION

In fiscal year (FY) 2014, 30,762 Marines attended the Transition Readiness Seminar (TRS) and historically almost 27,000 Marines transition on an annual basis from the Marine Corps to first-class citizens and veterans in civilian society.¹ This paper will examine the programmatic efficiency and effectiveness of the Marine Corps Transition Readiness Program (TRP) in the context of TRS, the Marine for Life Cycle to include case management, and the transition of Marines to civilian society after separation or retirement. This review will provide insight into current programmatic shortfalls and will then recommend pragmatic improvements to enhance TRP in order to ensure that we “keep faith” with every Marine who transitions to civilian society.² Any highlighting of shortcomings in TRP is meant only to improve the quality of transition assistance provided to Marines. It is my opinion that TRP personnel have done, and continue to do, incredible work on a daily basis. Their efforts have had an immeasurable impact on the lives of transitioning Marines and Marine Veterans.

The Marine Corps Transition Assistance Management Program (TAMP) was formally established in November of 1990 to comply with Public Law 101-510 and Title 10, U.S.C., §1141, which required all separating and retiring Marines and their spouses be given access to transition assistance services.³ The Marine Corps published Marine Corps Order P1754.5, “TAMP Standing Operating Procedures (SOP)” on 17 March 1995.⁴ This order stated that the combat readiness and effectiveness of Marines depended upon a number of factors to include training, leadership, personal affairs, and morale.⁵ While the Marine Corps was implementing its strategy to meet Department of Defense (DOD)-wide force reduction goals, concern about making a successful future transition from military service to civilian society was identified as a

factor that could affect the morale and combat readiness of Marines.⁶ The articulated purpose of TAMP was to assist Marines and their families, before, during, and after separation.⁷

IMPROVEMENTS TO MARINE CORPS TRANSITION ASSISTANCE

On 9 December 2002, the 32nd Commandant of the Marine Corps, General James L. Jones released an All Marine (ALMAR) message concerning shortfalls in the Marine Corps' ongoing connection with society and transition assistance for Marines.⁸ He outlined in ALMAR 068/02 the establishment of the Marine For Life (M4L) Program and the expansion of TAMP in order to address these shortfalls.⁹ General Jones stated that "Throughout our history, our legacy and our public reputation have been earned by the actions and example of the Marines who have gone before us. Every year we return nearly 27,000 Marines to society as first-class citizens. These Marines continue to serve an important role in our Corps. They connect us to the society on which we depend for our support, sustainment, and future potential. They also provide an untapped resource to provide improved transition assistance to our Marines leaving active service."¹⁰ He then cogently framed the problem as follows:

"The lack of an organized method of capitalizing on their resources, abilities, and continued involvement has resulted in the practical loss of several generations of Marines who have assimilated back into local communities with no coordinated, formal mechanism for staying connected to our Marine Corps Family. Although we return our transitioning Marines to society with leadership skills, Corps values, and proven abilities necessary for success, they face significant relocation issues such as employment, housing, and education as they re-establish themselves in the civilian workplace. While our existing Transition Assistance Management Program (TAMP) helps provide the basic tools to make the transition, there remains a void in our Marines' ability to capitalize on existing networks of Marine Veterans, Marine-friendly employers, and Marine-affiliated organizations throughout America. Currently, these resources are not coordinated in a manner that can be focused to provide transition assistance to our Marines."¹¹

On 18 June 2007, the 34th Commandant of the Marine Corps, General James T. Conway, signed “Marine Corps Vision and Strategy 2025, ‘Implementation Planning Guidance.’”¹² The last bullet of the Vision Statement articulated that the Marine Corps of the future will be “Committed to taking care of Marines and their families.”¹³ The Deputy Commandant, Manpower and Reserve Affairs (DC, M&RA) was then tasked, by 1 April 2009, to provide an assessment and any recommended changes that would improve the quality of life of our Marines and Sailors and their families.¹⁴

On 27 October 2010, the 35th Commandant of the Marine Corps, General James F. Amos, published his “Commandant’s Planning Guidance.” Priority #4 of that guidance was “We will keep faith with our Marines, our Sailors, and our families.” Task #3 within Priority #4 was to review and improve transition assistance. DC, M&RA was tasked to conduct an assessment of TRP and then recommend a plan to “revolutionize our approach” to better meet the needs of separating and retiring Marines. The assessment was due to be completed by 14 January 2011.¹⁵ There is no record of any MARADMIN or Marine Corps Order being released, after completion of this assessment, to improve Marine Corps transition assistance.¹⁶

CONGRESSIONALLY MANDATED CHANGES TO TRP AND THE CREATION OF TRS

Congress, on 21 November 2011, enacted Public Law 112-56, “The Veterans Opportunity to Work (VOW) To Hire Our Heroes Act,” which directed improvements to TRP. Each of the four services was mandated to implement certain programmatic requirements by 21 November 2012. These requirements included: mandatory attendance at TRS by all separating and retiring servicemembers with limited exceptions, pre-separation counseling, instruction in a military occupational specialty cross-walk to include the completion of a personalized gap analysis, attendance at a Department of Veteran Affairs (VA) entitlement brief, and attendance at

a U.S. Department of Labor (DOL) Employment Workshop resulting in the completion of a resume.¹⁷

The Marine Corps formally created TRS within TRP on 21 December 2012 through the release of MARADMIN 734/12.¹⁸ TRS replaced the old Transition Assistance Seminar (TAP) within TAMP. TRS complied with the mandatory Congressional requirements contained in Public Law 112-56 and included a pre-separation checklist (DD Form 2648), a twelve-month budget, a continuum of military service opportunity and reserve opportunities, a career interest assessment tool, a personalized gap analysis, VA training and registration for the VA E-benefits website, an Individual Transition Plan, a job application package, a DOL certificate for use at DOL one-stop career centers, and an education or technical training application package.¹⁹ Additionally, four intuitive and well-defined pathways were established to provide a roadmap for transitioning Marines: college/university education, career/technical training, employment, and entrepreneurial. The five-day “TRS Delivery Model” was piloted successfully at Marine Corps Air Station Miramar in March 2012 and included classes on each of the four pathways.²⁰

TRS became the foundation for a formal programmatic construct, in response to a Congressional mandate, to provide basic transition assistance training and education to Marines. TRS also enhanced the efficiency and effectiveness of the existing training that had been conducted within TRP, but is still only one-week in duration. Furthermore, Headquarters, U.S. Marine Corps has recently mandated the removal of pathway classes from TRS and Marines be given the option of coming back for a separate two-day seminar on their chosen pathway.²¹ This is problematic because Marines who have already taken a full week out of their schedule for TRS now have to come back to the local transition assistance office a second time for a separate two-day seminar in order to become educated on their pathway. Initial reports are that attendance

rates at these optional seminars are less than twenty-five percent of the total TRS population.²² Practically, it would seem to make sense to continue the pathway classes during TRS to provide a basic orientation and then hold tailored and personalized optional two-day pathway seminars to augment the training that Marines receive in TRS.

DOD-VA VETERANS EMPLOYMENT INITIATIVE (VEI) TASK FORCE

In August of 2011, President Barack Obama directed DOD and the VA to lead the VEI Task Force, made up of White House economic and domestic policy teams and representatives from federal agencies, to develop proposals to maximize the career readiness of transitioning servicemembers. On 27 December 2011, the VEI Task Force provided initial recommendations to redesign the military's existing TRP in ways that would prepare servicemembers for a more successful transition from military service to civilian life. The President then requested for the group to submit an implementation plan for its recommendations. In December 2012, the VEI Task Force delivered an implementation plan that contained four goals: adopt standards of "career readiness" for transitioning servicemembers, implement a revamped Transition Assistance Program curriculum, implement a "Capstone" to validate that Career Readiness Standards (CRS) have been met, and implement a "Military Life Cycle (MLC)" transition model.²³

CAPSTONE AND MARINE FOR LIFE CYCLE

In October 2013, a Capstone requirement was added to the transition process in MARADMIN 514/13.²⁴ Capstone was defined as "the culminating action in the transition process and served as the Commanding Officer's (CO's) verification that separating Marines meet Career Readiness Standards (CRS) and have a viable plan for transition to civilian life."²⁵ The mandated CRS requirements are for Marines to do the following: complete a twelve month

post-separation budget; to document requirements and eligibility for certification, licensure, and apprenticeship; to evaluate the transferability of military skills to the civilian workforce and a gap analysis; to register on the E-benefits website; to complete an Individual Transition Plan; to complete a Continuum of Military Service Opportunity counseling; to complete a job application package or present a job offer letter; to complete the assessment tool to identify personal interests concerning career selection; and to receive a DOL Gold Card and understand that post-9/11 Veterans have priority for six months at DOL American Job Centers.²⁶ Capstone will then be conducted by the CO or designee no later than ninety days before a Marine's separation or retirement.²⁷ On 14 January 2014, Marine Corps Bulletin 1700 formalized the CRS and Capstone requirements.²⁸

The Marine Corps is currently developing a Marine for Life Cycle initiative to optimize professional development opportunities and to integrate transition readiness throughout a Marine's career.²⁹ The concept is for the tracking of Marines from the moment they step on the yellow footprints until they transition from the Marine Corps to civilian society. The focus is on two principle touch points: when Marines arrive at their first permanent duty station (PDS) and attend the Personal Readiness Seminar (PRS), and when they attend TRS at least six months prior to separation or twelve months prior to retirement.³⁰ The PRS will provide basic information on personal financial management, facilitate the creation of an Individual Development Plan, and build an understanding of available Personal and Professional Development services.³¹

A complementary initiative is a MarineNet online course entitled "Your Readiness" that can satisfy part of the professional military education requirement for promotion to the rank of lance corporal.³² This course contains transition assistance related information to further educate

Marines. Marines receiving basic transition assistance classes, through PRS, is conceptually proactive and signals a programmatic step forward in establishing a more efficient and effective TRP. The MarineNet course is another tool to educate Marines on the importance of transition readiness.

The critical piece for Marines will be the sustainability of transition readiness throughout the entire Marine for Life Cycle so that they can continually build their knowledge over time in anticipation of separation or retirement. Marine participation in PRS, in one MarineNet course, and in TRS at the end of a four-year enlistment is a starting point that provides a baseline metric to evaluate a Marine's readiness for transition to civilian society. With that said, the VEI Task Force developed a total of seven touch points over the course of a servicemember's military life cycle which include: first PDS; reenlistment, promotion, deployment/redeployment, mobilization/demobilization/deactivation; change of duty station; major life events; and separation or retirement.³³ Programmatically, the Marine Corps has articulated that the intent in the future is to integrate these remaining touch points into the Marine for Life Cycle.³⁴ There are numerous transition assistance benefits derived from Marine participation in the Marine for Life Cycle touch points, but they only represent one-half of the equation. The other half of the equation are the relevant readiness metrics that are derived from the quantitative, qualitative, and temporal tracking of Marines as they progress through the Marine for Life Cycle to establish the programmatic efficiency and effectiveness of TRP in setting the conditions for Marines to be successful before and after they transition to civilian society.³⁵ Success is defined as when a Marine can efficiently and effectively complete all procedural, substantive, and temporal programmatic transition assistance requirements prior to transition to civilian society. After transition to civilian society, success is defined as validation of one of the four selected pathways

through formal enrollment in a college/university, formal enrollment in career/technical training, actual full-time employment, or substantive actions taken to become an entrepreneur.

CASE MANAGEMENT AND TRANSITIONING MARINES

Case management in DOD is traditionally defined in the context of health care as “a collaborative process under the population health continuum, which assesses, plans, implements, coordinates, monitors, and evaluates options and services to meet an individual’s health needs through communication and available resources to promote quality cost-effective outcomes.”³⁶ There is no formal definition in the Marine Corps TRP for the case management of transitioning Marines.³⁷ One definition could be a collaborative process under the population of the transition assistance continuum, which assesses, plans, implements, coordinates, tracks, and evaluates options and services to meet an individual Marine’s transition assistance needs through communication and available resources to promote efficient and effective transition to civilian society.

There is currently no Marine Corps case management system to assess, plan, implement, coordinate, track, and evaluate transition assistance training and education for Marines over the course of their Marine for Life Cycle and after transition to civilian society.³⁸ The current programmatic method to collect quantitative data is to query DoD databases or to consult locally maintained databases for TRS attendance and completion of Capstone.³⁹ Local transition assistance facilities receive thousands of hard-copy DD Form 2648s (pre-separation counseling forms) and DD Form 2958s (Capstone forms) from Marines who attend TRS.⁴⁰ Transition assistance personnel then have to enter manually Congressional and DoD mandated data from the five page DD Form 2648 and the DD Form 2958 into two separate DoD databases.⁴¹ This

requires local transition assistance offices to task trained transition assistance personnel to be data entry clerks.⁴² As a result, thousands of man hours a year, which could be devoted to counseling Marines on transition assistance, are lost to inefficient and antiquated administrative requirements.

To complete DD Form 2958 (Capstone form) requirements, a Marine must physically maintain a hard copy of his or her resume, budget, and transition documents for a period of six to nine months prior to separation. He or she must then physically return the form to the transition assistance office after completion so that the data can be entered into DoD databases. This process is also inefficient and antiquated. A sample review of local return rate data for DD Form 2958s at certain transition assistance offices indicates that it is less than twenty percent.⁴³ Furthermore, local transition assistance offices are then required to spend thousands of man hours a year of follow-up to obtain the DD Form 2958s from individual Marines or their unit.⁴⁴ Copying, printing, and storage of these documents are also costly and would be eliminated through a web-based case management system that would provide Marines with the ability to access the form online, complete it with their transition counselor or during TRS, and submit it electronically for signature.⁴⁵

For TRS registration, transition assistance personnel receive weekly telephone calls and e-mails from hundreds of Unit Transition Coordinators (UTC) and manually schedule Marines for training. A web-based appointment system would improve the efficiency of the scheduling process and improve the productivity of UTCs, Installation Personnel Administration Center Staff, and transition assistance personnel. Furthermore, the transition assistance staff currently have to create registration rosters and track TRS class attendance manually. A web-based registration system would automate those processes.⁴⁶

There is also no formal tool to qualitatively track a Marine's selection of one of the four transition pathways of college/university education, career/technical training, employment, or entrepreneurship. Furthermore, there is no mechanism to track Marines after they transition to civilian society. In other words, there is also no system to qualitatively track the efficiency and effectiveness of whether a Marine successfully transitioned to civilian society in the college/university education, career/technical training, employment, or entrepreneurial pathway.

Additionally, there is no mechanism to temporally track a Marine's completion of TRS at a minimum of six months prior to separation or twelve months prior to retirement. Locally maintained data on compliance rates for Marines to complete TRS within six months of separation indicate a level less than fifty percent.⁴⁷ That means one out of every two Marines is not completing TRS within six months of separation. Furthermore, locally maintained data indicates that almost twenty percent of Marines who are scheduled to attend TRS do not show up due to unanticipated command requirements to include assignment to range details or command events.⁴⁸ As a result, almost one in five Marines take up limited class seats and then are not able to make the class. This has a domino effect and often causes a delay in the re-scheduling of TRS for up to six additional weeks.

A recent Government Accountability Office (GAO) Report provided that Marine Corps representatives stated the reason there is no case management system is "because they have a long-standing culture of requiring servicemembers to attend TRP training, such an oversight mechanism was not necessary."⁴⁹ The GAO Report also provided that the Marine Corps had the highest TRP compliance rate of all of the services, but DOD did not provide any data on those rates.⁵⁰ In essence, the basic argument is that the primary readiness metric for determination of the efficiency and effectiveness of the Marine Corps TRP is actual participation in TRS. Since

the participation level of Marine Corps personnel in TRS is higher than the other services as a result of our culture, there is no apparent need for a case management system. This argument neglects consideration of the efficiency and effectiveness of TRP in the context of the performance of personnel and units in completing the mandated TRP requirements in a timely fashion. The reason for the time-based, sequential, and progressive requirements are to ensure that the individual Marine has the proper amount of time to prepare and be successful in pursuing his or her respective pathway prior to transition. The argument also fails to consider that existing processes provide no qualitative data of the Marines' success after transition. This data would provide key insight into the efficiency and effectiveness of TRP.

Since there is also no formal case management system at the unit level for commanders to quantitatively, qualitatively, or temporally track the efficient and effective completion of TRP requirements or to determine programmatic effectiveness after transition to civilian society, the remaining tool is Capstone.⁵¹ Capstone is a rudimentary hard-copy counseling and case management capability for a CO to verify that transitioning Marines have satisfied their CRS, through the completion of TRS, within ninety-days of separation or retirement.⁵² If a Marine has not satisfied CRS, then the command is placed in the position of being reactive to this transition assistance deficiency. Based upon such a limited time frame of ninety-days to satisfy CRS, through completion of TRS, it is unlikely that the Marine will be set up for success as he or she transitions to civilian society. It is also important to highlight that the Capstone counseling does not have to be done by the CO, but can be delegated down to designated UTCs, often a non-commissioned officer (NCO).⁵³ Consequently, the level of rigor associated with the Capstone counseling will be largely dependent upon the CO's prioritization and support of the unit TRP.

Commands and Marines are being done a disservice by the lack of a comprehensive administrative view of individual unit efficiency and effectiveness for transition readiness. Additionally, there is no measurement of compliance with mandatory timelines for completion of transition assistance requirements to include TRS. There are currently limited and antiquated methods, in the form of informal counseling and hard-copy documents respectively, to hold individual units or Marines accountable. The lack of a Marine Corps case management system for transition readiness is a programmatic shortfall.

The Marine Corps should adopt a web-based case management system to track all Marines through their entire Marine for Life Cycle and their transition to civilian society. This system should be linked to Marine Online and DoD databases to facilitate the auto-population of personal information and for ease of use. A case management system is not a novel concept in the Marine Corps. The Marine Corps legal community has had a case management system for five years that quantitatively, qualitatively, and temporally tracks every court-martial across the Marine Corps.⁵⁴

This case management system should include a portal for Marines to register and to make appointments for each step in the transition assistance process. This will not only facilitate the tracking of administrative requirements, but will also minimize the requirement for generation of hard-copy documentation. Additionally, a portal within the case management system should be developed to measure the success of TRP. It should collect and organize data on the placement of transitioning Marines in one of the four pathways and also the quantitative, qualitative, and temporal completion of all transition assistance requirements to include PRS, TRS, and Capstone.

Accountability measures should be instituted for senior leaders to ensure Marines attend TRS and complete TRP requirements in accordance with existing laws and regulations.⁵⁵ A portal should be created within the case management system to track timely completion of all transition assistance requirements for each Marine and individual transition assistance information for the Marine should be linked to their respective units. This information should also be integrated into existing Marine Corps Force Preservation Councils so that there can be command level visibility over transition readiness and the efficient and effective transition of Marines from their units.⁵⁶ Finally, a notification system within the portal should be created that would provide monthly reports on individual unit transition assistance requirements, percentages of completion for transitioning Marines, and compliance with mandatory timelines for transition.

TRANSITION ASSISTANCE AND EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES

An examination of the DOL data for unemployed veterans highlights that veterans of the two recent wars have a 7.9 percent unemployment rate, compared to 6.0 percent for the American civilian population, as of January 2015.⁵⁷ DOL also reported that DoD paid \$589 million dollars in unemployment compensation for ex-servicemembers (UCX) for FY-2014.⁵⁸

In November 2013, The Center for Naval Analyses conducted a study entitled “Veteran Unemployment of Transitioning Marines.”⁵⁹ This study examined UCX for veterans who were honorably discharged from their respective service. Each service pays for the regular UCX benefits for up to twenty-six weeks and extended benefits for an additional twenty-weeks. The Marine Corps paid \$90.6 million dollars in UCX for FY-2014.⁶⁰ This demonstrates that prospects for civilian employment can be a challenge as Marines transition from the unique culture and environment of military service to civilian society.⁶¹ Unfortunately, there is

currently no linkage between TRP and transitioning Marines who receive UCX benefits. As a result, there is no feedback mechanism to determine potential reasons for why Marines were unemployed and had to request UCX benefits. The three quantitative and qualitative metrics readily available are that 30,762 Marines attended TRS in FY-2014, that 7.9 percent of all servicemembers from the two recent wars are unemployed, 1.9 percent above the average unemployment rate for civilian society, and that the Marine Corps paid \$90.6 million dollars in UCX in FY-2014.⁶²

An annual web-based survey notification system should be created to contact Marines who have transitioned to civilian society. The intent would be to receive feedback on TRP, to obtain updates on the success of individual pathways, and to capture potential movement from one pathway to another to include UCX. This feedback mechanism could be used by all levels of command from the service headquarters down to the battalion/squadron level to evaluate the efficiency and effectiveness of TRP. The system and survey capability would create a proactive approach to identifying shortfalls in TRP and lead to substantive improvements. As a result, the Marine Veteran unemployment rate and the unemployment compensation paid to new Marine Veterans would also be reduced.

TRP AND MARINE FOR LIFE (M4L) PROGRAM

There is no formal link that exists between TRP and the M4L Program other than a one-hour ad hoc M4L brief that is given at the local level during TRS. As a result, there is no formal hand-off of transitioning Marines to the M4L Program. Closely related to the M4L Program is a lack of any formal Marine Corps mentorship initiative for transitioning Marines to work with Marine Veterans. Transitioning Marines have no formal opportunity to be voluntarily mentored by Marine Veterans who are potentially students or employed in the same chosen pathway.

Consequently, transitioning Marines are deprived of potential opportunities to begin to build networks in their future geographical location with Marine Veterans. Marine Corps Recruiting Command already has in place a conceptually similar mentorship initiative.⁶³ Active duty Marine Corps judge advocate mentors are geographically linked with Platoon Leaders Class-Law (PLC-Law) Officer mentees who are law school students. This mentor/mentee relationship facilitates the creation of networks within the Marine Corps judge advocate community in anticipation of the PLC-Law Officer accessing to active duty as a judge advocate.⁶⁴

A TRP case management system should also be linked to the M4L Program. This would facilitate a warm hand-off of transitioning Marines from TRP to the M4L Program. The mentorship initiative could then voluntarily link transitioning Marines to Marine Veterans in the local community through TRP and the M4L Program. The network of available mentors would be developed from the case management system that captures the names of Marines who have already transitioned to civilian society. This would also facilitate transitioning Marines being able to build networks in their future geographical location and in their chosen pathway. Additionally, it would provide transitioning Marines with potential local resources, with a mechanism to be further educated on their respective future pathway, and with another tool to bridge the gap between military service and civilian society.

MARINE CORPS ORDER AND ANNUAL TRAINING FOR TRP

The Marine Corps does not presently have a Marine Corps Order for TRP. As a result, commanders, staff, and local transition assistance offices are forced to navigate through myriad MARADMINS, an ALMAR, and a MCBUL to determine the applicable TRP requirements. It is important to consider this state of affairs in the context of the Commandant of the Marine Corps' Planning Guidance from four years ago that directed a review of transition assistance in order to

“revolutionize our approach” to better meet the needs of separating and retiring Marines. A Marine Corps Order would provide a basic roadmap for all Marines to follow for TRP.

There is no formal TRP training for leaders at each level in the chain of command. An annual training requirement should be implemented for officers, staff non-commissioned officers (SNCO), and NCOs so that they can stay abreast of current transition readiness requirements and ensure that their Marines are set up for success as they transition from the Marine Corps to civilian society. Additionally, training for TRP should be incorporated into Cornerstone: The Commandant’s Combined Commandership Course and the SNCO and NCO courses at the Staff Academy.

CONCLUSION

The Marine Corps TRP has improved at the deck plate level over the last two years through the adoption of new transition assistance requirements to include a formal one-week standardized TRS and Capstone. The implementation of the Marine for Life Cycle concept will further improve transition readiness. However, significant programmatic shortfalls exist in quantitatively, qualitatively, and temporally tracking Marines through the course of their Marine for Life Cycle and with measuring the efficiency and effectiveness of the transition of Marines to civilian society. There is presently no case management system in place across the Marine Corps to capture these relevant readiness metrics. A case management system would enhance the efficiency and effectiveness of TRP through tracking the Marine for Life Cycle, memorializing the timely completion of all transition assistance requirements, facilitating Marine Veteran mentoring of transitioning Marines, and confirming the successful transition of Marines to civilian society. There is also no Marine Corps Order on TRP and no formal TRP training for

leaders at each level in the chain of command. Creation of a Marine Corps Order and annual training requirements would provide a roadmap to educate leaders on the importance of TRP. Implementation of all of these measures would promote the proactive identification of points of friction in TRP and would keep faith with our Marines by further setting the conditions for them to succeed as they transition to first-class citizens and veterans in civilian society.



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